KENTUCKY BOARD OF EDUCATION ANNUAL RETREAT May 14-15, 2003

STATE BOARD ROOM 1ST FLOOR, CAPITAL PLAZA TOWER FRANKFORT, KENTUCKY

SUMMARY MINUTES

The Kentucky Board of Education held its annual retreat on May 14-15, 2003, in the State Board Room, First Floor, Capital Plaza Tower, Frankfort, Kentucky. The Board conducted the following business:

Wednesday, May 14, 2003

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Helen Mountjoy called the retreat to order at 9:00 a.m.

ROLL CALL

Present for the meeting were Janice Allen, Alcie Combs, Dorie Combs, Gail Henson, Jeff Mando, Helen Mountjoy, Hilma Prather, Samuel Robinson, David Tachau, and Keith Travis. Paul Whalen joined the meeting in progress at 9:30 a.m. Absent was Thomas Layzell.

PRIORITIES AND STRUCTURE FOR THE KBE

Opening comments given by Chair Helen Mountjoy were as follows:

- The Board needs to come to consensus on several issues at the retreat and faces many challenges.
- Only 22% of the General Assembly members were in office in 1990, when KERA passed, and 78% have little or no ownership in it.
- The business community was a prime leader in bringing about education reform in 1990.
- The one constant that exists is the reform opponents.
- Issues to be considered in the Board's planning include the *No Child Left Behind* requirements, the reduction in KDE personnel and funds, state budget problems and internal issues relative to KDE organizational structure.
- The Board needs to look at the way it is organized relative to the work to be done.
- Transition planning needs to occur to develop Board leadership.

• In the first ten years of KERA, the Board was subsumed by implementation of the legislation and now we must look at what changes must be made in order to respond to the current environment.

Role of Board. Next, Mountjoy talked about the role of the Board and noted that it, as mandated by law, develops and adopts the regulations that governs Kentucky's 176 public school districts and the actions of the Department of Education, is authorized to establish performance standards for local school districts, can mandate corrective action when a district does not meet the standards or its leaders are not successful in making improvements, reviews the Department's budget request, oversees the common schools and hires the Commissioner of Education. In short, she emphasized that the Board is responsible for the education system preschool through grade 12.

When asked what the Board should be doing, the following responses came from its members:

- Regulate
- Set policies to be implemented by the Department of Education
- Lead with forward thinking and not maintaining the status quo
- Monitor/oversight
- Lobby
- Serve as an advocate for education
- Communicate
- Serve as the board for KSB/KSD
- Serve as spokespersons for education in Kentucky
- Interpret and clarify
- Analyze
- Respond to external forces
- Create new roles/responsibilities
- Support staff's work
- Punish local officials for breaking the law
- Serve as a balance between the various viewpoints that exist
- Spend money
- Prioritize
- Set the mission that drives everything else

Board Priorities. The Board then moved to a discussion on the need to rally around the needs of children relative to making decisions because public education seems to be under attack. It was suggested that educating legislators and political candidates must be a focus between now and the next legislative session. Being more proactive on where education needs to move next and standing up as true leaders were noted. Leading and advocating for education was characterized as one of the Board's top priorities over the next year.

The Board moved on to look at last year's priorities and to evaluate whether the current strategic plan is taking education in the right direction. Agreement was reached that under 2.3 in the current plan, a phrase needed to be added to read, "Increase the diversity of leadership and instructional staff". Otherwise, consensus was reached that the current priorities and plans were still the right ones to pursue.

Effects of Budget Cuts. At this point, Chair Mountjoy asked Commissioner Wilhoit to summarize the effects of budget cuts on the Department of Education. Commissioner Wilhoit summarized the effects as follows:

- Some legislators and the public perceive that there are huge numbers of employees within the Department of Education. However, if KSB and KSD are excluded, the Department is small in size.
- The Department is one over on the principal assistant quota required by the last legislative session. However, some other personnel actions have exacerbated this issue.
- The Department is 19 over its quota on the reduction of unclassified staff that must come from the leadership positions.
- In an environment of reducing leadership staff, rethinking the Department's structure and realigning programs around three centers of work is occurring to focus on how we are going to improve education for children. Those centers were identified as the Center for Agency Support, Center for Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment and the Center for Services for Schools and Districts. The Commissioner said the Board would be receiving the details on the work of these centers very soon.
- Relative to maintaining connectivity with schools and districts after the loss of the Regional Service Centers some brokering folks will be put into place out in the field. The creation of these positions exacerbates the principal assistant problem but maintains a vital communication link.
- With Lois Adams-Rodgers' retirement, Linda France will be taking that position. France is one of the best superintendents in the state and brings credibility to the job because she has been a local superintendent. She starts July 1.

Committee Structure. Chair Mountjoy moved on to discussing the committee structure for the Board over the next year. She asked Board members to think about, given the situation described by Commissioner Wilhoit relative to personnel and budget cuts, whether the Board's current structure is still the best for getting the desired results. She noted that with fewer people on staff, the role for the Board needs to be giving staff direction at the beginning of the work process. Mountjoy felt that the work at the committee level over the last year has not been as substantive as it could have been and stated whatever structure the Board approves, the result needs to be substantive work for every committee. Mountjoy proposed having more committees to spread the leadership development on the Board across more individuals. Her proposal was to have a curriculum committee, a management/finance committee, a KSB/KSD committee and an assessment and accountability committee that would meet regularly at every Board meeting. Her conception for incorporating the structure into the Board agenda included beginning with the opening activities for the full board at every meeting, starting the first

set of committees by 10:00 a.m., having some full Board presentations after lunch and then following with the second round of committee meetings. On the second day of the meeting, the items would be full board items and the committee reports.

Comments from the Board members on the proposed committee structure were as follows:

- The committee structure that is put in place needs to focus on getting the work done. It needs to focus on setting policy/direction but not on being educational experts.
- The Board needs to know about the reorganization of the Department in order to help it determine what the committee structure should be.
- There is concern that increased number of committees separates Board members too much and there is benefit in wrestling with decisions as a full board.
- With all the questions on assessment, a separate committee could be beneficial.
- It would be best to wait on making a decision on committee structure in June.

No decision on committee structure was made at this point in the retreat.

BUDGET AND FUNDING PRIORITIES

Guidance on Budget Development. Chair Mountjoy noted that the whole reason for moving the annual retreat to May was to start the budget priorities discussion earlier in the year. She asked the Board to think about whether it wants to take a position on revenue enhancement, changes to SEEK or other budget-related matters.

Commissioner Wilhoit referred Board members to the budget summary provided in the meeting packet. Bonnie Brinly added that the Department will probably get budget instructions for a 0% increase. Deputy Commissioner Kevin Noland explained that the Board can choose to follow these instructions or submit a budget that it believes is necessary for the improvement of education in the state.

Board members generally felt that it behooves the Board to take a lead on supporting enhancement because the Board should set the tone for others to follow. Agreement was reached that Board members or some subset of the Board should meet with each candidate for Governor and that at the June meeting the Board should pass a resolution on the general necessity for adequate funding of schools that does not endorse any specific revenue approach. Board members asked to see the resolution in advance in order to provide input on the wording.

Areas of agreement relative to budget priorities were as follows:

- SEEK increase as the number one priority
- Full funding of preschool

- Funding of all-day kindergarten
- Funding for textbooks in the future
- Funding of education technology at the \$20 million level
- Funding of rewards at the \$10 million level and pursuit of better ways to distribute the rewards dollars

Staff were asked to come back to the June meeting to confirm the direction the Board had outlined for future budget development.

Thursday, May 15, 2003

COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

Proof of Progress Website. Hunt Helm was asked to talk about the change to the KDE website that would assist in securing support for education in Kentucky. Helm commented that he was glad to see the Board wanted to come out with stronger messages relative to its position on education and noted that a KBE/KDE outreach discussion document was part of the materials sent to them for the retreat. He said that within that document, the new Proof of Progress website was mentioned. Helm explained that this new site is designed to show that Kentucky's education system is working and why the public can believe this. He stated that the site pulls together all the national recognition Kentucky has received and provides common messages that users can tap into. At this point, Helm gave a brief visual presentation showing features of the new Proof of Progress website.

Board members then requested that Helm add the following to the website to strengthen it:

- A reference to recent finance studies on adequacy and the need for additional dollars
- Two graphs that show increased funding is needed for elementary and secondary education, one on inflation and the other on the percent that elementary and secondary education are of the state budget
- Some way to show the kind of information that CATS provides for students and parents to combat the criticism that parents don't get individual data on their children

Other Communications Issues. Other communication issues that the Board asked staff to attend to were as follows:

- Put together a PowerPoint presentation (15-20 minutes) that hits the highlights of Kentucky's education system and focuses on clearing up any inaccurate claims.
- Provide consistent messages for Board members when they go to local meetings like the Rotary Club or Chamber of Commerce.
- Make sure that teachers, principals, superintendents and KDE staff are familiar with the information on the new Proof of Progress website.

- Hold meetings with the two gubernatorial candidates to make sure they have the correct data relative to Kentucky's education system. Staff is to come back to the Board with a proposal on how best to structure these meetings.
- Send an explanation on the *Education Review* study, where Kentucky's grades changed, to education partners. The Board desires a more aggressive approach to sharing information with partners.
- Work with the Education Coalition as they draft their comprehensive message for the next legislative session. It is essential to hold on to the parts of Kentucky's education system that truly make a difference and be willing to negotiate on things that could be changed for possible improvement.

Working with the Legislature. Next, the Board dealt with how best to work with members of the legislature. They were asked to think about what is needed for them to be an effective advocate with legislators and the responses were as follows:

- Talking points
- Web site information
- Tips on what works in talking with and contacting legislators
- When the optimal time is for making legislative contacts
- Immediate notification of legislative committee meeting dates
- A revised list of legislative contacts that best fits each Board member because of acquaintances or specific knowledge about certain legislators
- Regular Op Ed pieces on critical issues
- A more user-friendly format for Friday Memo similar to *GADFLY*

Other Board Requests. In addition to the materials listed above to help Board members be effective with legislators, they asked for the following to be produced for each full Board briefing occurring at regular meetings:

- A news release ahead of time
- A press release after the fact
- Bullet points/talking points for Board members and education partners

INTERNAL BOARD BUSINESS

Items discussed in this portion of the meeting were:

- The status of Kentucky's plan in response to the *No Child Left Behind Act* was shared. The Commissioner had hoped to have more guidance from the USDOE at this point. He said that the United States Department of Education (USDOE) wants all states' plans approved by June 8, but stated at this point only seventeen are approved. Wilhoit noted that he had sent a letter to USDOE asking for clarification from the peer review session but had not yet received a response.
- The Board agreed by consensus to implement the new committee system in August previously proposed by Chair Mountjoy.

- The Board considered revised meeting dates for the rest of 2003 and 2004. Mary Ann Miller was asked to bring those meeting dates to the Board for official approval in June.
- Hilma Prather then asked for approval of travel to an Education Commission of the States' meeting that would occur following the Board's June meeting. Dorie Combs moved approval of the travel and Paul Whalen seconded the motion. The motion carried.
- Helen Mountjoy requested that the Board approve the reappointment of Gail Henson to the Pre-K to 16 Council and designate her as chair. Jeff Mando so moved and Sam Robinson seconded the motion. The motion carried.
- The Board considered appointment of the Performance Judgment Appeals Panel as follows: Samuel Robinson (Chair), Jeffrey Mando and Gail Henson. Keith Travis moved approval of the appointments and Paul Whalen seconded the motion. The motion carried.
- Relative to KSB and KSD graduations, Mary Ann Miller was asked to email the
 details on these events to Board members and see if it is possible for any of them to
 attend.
- The final business item dealt with the approval of the NASBE dues and the Board gave approval for staff to pay them.

ADJOURNMENT

The Board adjourned the annual retreat at 12:20 p.m.